

## IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL BY USING FOUR SQUARE WRITING METHOD (FSWM)

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**Abstract:** The objectives of the research are to find out whether or not Four Square Writing Method (FSWM) improves the students' writing skill in narrative text and to describe what happens when Four Square Writing Method is implemented in writing class. The method that was used in the research is action research which is focused on the process. The research was done 4 months. The data were used is qualitative which were analyzed with assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building interpretation and reporting the outcomes and quantitative which were analyzed with descriptive statistic ( find the mean score only). From the analysis data shown that FSWM can be used to improve students' writing skill in narrative text and the situation of English class more active and condusive.

**Key words:** Four Square Writing Method, Writing skill, Writing class

Writing, as one of the English skills, is important to be improved particularly in academic life. When student's writing skill was improved, students will be able to perform specific writing assignments, for example, essay question on an examination and writing a paper. In addition, writing skill is required when students are given a free choice of topic and they should write about something that students are interested in.

Furthermore, writing activity has been applied in academic life which has beneficiably improved student's writing skill. In senior high school syllabus, the importance of improving writing skill is stated clearly. For instance, in competency standard and basic standard (SKKD) for writing, the syllabus states that students should be able to express the meaning in short functional text and simple essay in

daily life context. Especially for the eleventh grade of senior high school, it is limited on narrative, report and analytical exposition texts. The students should express and develop the topic of the text, organize the paragraph in a text, use appropriate vocabulary, construct sentences and use convention in writing. The passing grade for English lesson in this school is stated at 76.00. Although the writing skills of eleventh grade of social 4 students aren't good enough and need to be improved. It was revealed through an interview that the researcher conducted with them prior to the research.

According to them, english was difficult, especially for writing. They had low writing skill. Their low writing skill was indicated by some indicators having been gathered in the pre-research. They were: (1) difficulties in expressing their

ideas. Many students feel difficult to find the ideas when writing process. Students find it difficult to write because they do not understand in arranging the words in order to form a good sentence and creating sentences into a good paragraph, the ideas of the story are not well developed and the use of conjunction are ambiguous in some cases; (2) confused about grammar or tenses that should be used; (3) difficulties in learning and memorizing English vocabulary. The limited of vocabularies make the students difficult to express their ideas; (4) difficulties to develop the text. It is caused by the lack of cohesiveness and coherence. The students do not have a good guidance of how to write systematically. They also have limited knowledge about words transition; (5) have problem in punctuations. The students write the sentence in wrong word order and carelessly punctuate the text that may lead to misinterpretation.

Other problems are seen from the situation in the classroom, like; (1) students cannot answer when the teacher asks questions and they seldom ask to the teacher; (2) they keep on maintaining their activity which has no relation with the lesson like drawing, joking, chatting, daydreaming; (3) some of them are indicated not too interested in the lesson, it seems that they get bored when they have to wait and see the model of the lesson; and (4) students refuse to present their writings in front of the class. They do not want their writings being read or known by other people.

Teaching writing with appropriate media is crucial to make the writing class becomes more effective, interesting, and enjoyable for the students. According to Lewis and Hill (1990) students are unlikely to be very succesful at learning unless they enjoy the process. Accordingly, teacher

should apply appropriate techniques in teaching writing in order or make students enjoy the writing process; one them is teaching writing through Four Square Writing Method. The researcher believes that Four Square Writing Method (FSWM) is a good method in conducting writing activity. By conducting a classroom action research that implements Four Square Writing Method, it is expected that the teacher be able to improve the students' writing skill. Four Square Writing Method is a method of teaching basic writing skills that uses step by step approach that is built around a simplified graphic organizer as a visual framework for assisting students with formulating ideas in an organized manner prior to write texts. It means that by using FSWM, students will be able to explore ideas to write. The step by step approach can help students in cohesiveness, coherence and transition words. The graphic organizer used can help the students in words choice and word order since it is an instructional tool of structuring information and also a visual representation of knowledge that is employed to focus writing, to provide detail and to enhance word choice.

The FSWM is chosen because it has many benefits, they are: the visual organizers in FSWM help students to conceptualize, understand, and structure a piece of written discourse successfully; FSWM can be applied in teaching writing for students in grade 1- 12; it also can be applied in some genre, such as descriptive, narrative, recount and persuasive; FSWM is fun, it is a creative process and natural way to organize th student's thought; it prevents the student from including irrelevant content; and the last the direction for writing in FSWM is made as clearly as possible, so that the students will not be confused.

To have the better understanding about writing, the researcher presents some basic theories about writing suggested by some experts. Bell and Burnaby in Nunan (1998: 36) say that writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously. At the sentence level these include control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and letter formation. Beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraphs and texts.

According to Harris (1993: 10), writing is a process that occurs over period of time, particularly if we take account the sometimes extended periods of thinking that precede initial draft. In writing, the writer needs a time to do some processes inside. The length of the time is different among writers. Some needs longer time to just think about what to write before making the initial draft.

The next definition is given by Byrne. He states that writing is producing a

sequence of sentences arranged in particular order and linked together in certain ways. A sequence of sentences whether it is short or long after being put in order and linked together, they will form a coherent whole. This coherent whole is called as text. A text may consist of one paragraph or more Byrne (1997: 1).

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that writing is a process that occurs over a period of time to produce a sequence of sentences arranged in a particular order and linked together in certain ways that is cohesive and coherent.

Harris (1969: 68-69) says there are five components which can be used to evaluate writing ability. They are: contents, grammar, word choice, organization, and mechanics.

Genesse and Upshur (1996: 207) suggest general categories which are often used for the evaluation of students writing, namely content, organization, vocabulary, language use or grammar, and mechanic. They also give numeral scores for each of the above categories as follow:

*Table 1. The Scoring Rubric of Writing*

	Score	Criteria	Description
<b>Content</b>	30 – 27	Excellent to Very Good	Knowledgeable, substantive development of thesis, relevant to assigned topic.
	26 – 22	Good to Average	Sure knowledge of subject, adequate range, limited development of thesis, mostly relevant to topic but lacks detail
	21 – 17	Fair to Poor	Limited knowledge of subject, little substance, in adequate development of topic Doesn't show knowledge of subject, non-substantive, not pertinent, or not enough to evaluate
	16 – 13	Very Poor	

<b>Organization</b>	20 – 18	Excellent to Very Good	Fluent expression, ideas clearly stated/supported, succinct, well organized, logical sequencing cohesive
	17 – 14	Good to Average	Somewhat choppy, loosely organized but main ideas stand out, limited support, logical but incomplete sequencing
	13 – 10	Fair to Poor Very Poor	Non-fluent, ideas confused or disconnected, lacks logical sequencing and development
	9 – 7		Does not communicate, no organization, or not enough to evaluate
<b>Vocabulary</b>	20 – 18	Excellent to Very Good	Sophisticated range, effective word/idiom choice and usage, word form mastery, appropriate register,
	17 – 14	Good to Average	Adequate range, occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage, but meaning not obscured
	13 – 10	Fair to Poor Very Poor	Limited range, frequent of word/idiom form, choice, usage, meaning confused or obscured
	9 – 7		Essentially translation, little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, word form, or not enough to evaluate
<b>Language Use</b>	25 – 22	Excellent to Very Good	Effective and complex constructions, few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions.
	21 – 18	Good to Average	Effective but simple constructions, minor problems in complex constructions, several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions, but meaning seldom obscured.
	17 – 11	Fair to Poor	Major problems in simple/complex constructions, frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions and/or fragments, run-ons, deletions, meaning confused or obscured.
	10 – 5	Very Poor	Virtually no mastery of sentence constructions rules, dominated by errors, doesn't communicate, or not enough to evaluate.

<b>Mechanics</b>	5	Excellent to Very	Demonstrates mastery of conventions, few errors of spelling,
	4	Good	punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing.
	3	Good to Average	Occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, but meaning not obscured.
	2	Fair to Poor	Frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, poor hand writing, meaning confused or obscured.
		Very Poor	No mastery of conventions, dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, hand writing illegible, or not enough to evaluate.

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## RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher used action research with 38 eleventh graders of senior high school as the subject. The research was conducted in some steps: (1) Problem identification which was done through four techniques including pre-test, questionnaire, observation, and interview; (2) planning the action which included the step of making instructional materials, media, and anything needed for the research; (3) implementing the action in which the researcher implemented Four Square Writing Method to teach writing skill; (4) observing the action where the researcher observed the students' behavior and anything happened during the implementation of FSWM ; (5) reflecting the action which the researcher reflected the research findings in order to get both strengths and weaknesses of implementation of FSWM; and (6) revising the plan in which the researcher revised the previous plan based on the weaknesses found from the implementation of FSWM.

The qualitative data were collected by using some techniques including observation, interview, questionnaire, and photos. While, the quantitative data were collected from the students' writing score

from test (pre-test, post-test 1 and post-test 2).

The next step of the study was analyzing the data. Qualitative data were analyzed by assembling data, coding the data, comparing the data, building interpretation, and reporting outcome. Then, the quantitative data which were obtained from test were analyzed by using descriptive statistics formula.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this research, the researcher used FSWM for teaching writing. The implementation of the researcher used FSWM in the classroom were:

### Four Square Writing Method to Improve Exploring Ideas to Write

In categorizing step of Four Square Writing Method, the students are asked to explore their ideas and write it on FSGO, before they make a story. The draft on FSGO helps the students to organize their ideas. It also helps the students to be more focused on their story. The graphic organizer provides visual representations of concepts, knowledge, or ideas. By "mapping" thoughts and information, writing becomes more focused and clear.

Graphic organizers help individual “visualize” information in a way that is easier to “see” and understand. The FSWM also gives their students a conceptual framework for elaboration.

#### **Four Square Writing Method to Improve Coherence and Cohesiveness**

The research findings show that the students were better in coherence and cohesiveness. Graphic organizer in Four Square Writing Method helps the students to organize and use the generic structure of narrative text. The students were able to use transition words like then, after that, finally, etc. This finding is supported by Gloria in Gould and Gould (2002: iv) who states that visual organizers help the students to provide coherence and cohesiveness.

#### **Four Square Writing Method to Improve Vocabulary**

The research findings show that the students had rich word choices. Listing words or phrases on FSGO before writing the story, had made the students able to select appropriate words to express their writing. Four-square method is one way to help vocabulary development. The pre-writing in FSWM and organizational skills are taught by using a graphic organizer. The visual aid is employed to focus writing, provide detail, and enhance word choice. The four square is a learning activity to develop and increase a student’s vocabulary knowledge.

#### **Four Square Writing Method to Improve Language Use**

The research findings show that the students were able to apply the appropriate tense and word order in their sentences, for an example; long time ago, there lived a girl named Clarissa. These findings are similar to Gould and Gould (in [www.four\\_square\\_writing\\_for\\_grade\\_3-5](http://www.four_square_writing_for_grade_3-5).) who state that the focus of FSWM is not only delivering the ideas and enriching vocabulary but also guiding the students to make the sentences in correct tenses.

#### **Four Square Writing Method to Improve Mechanics**

The research findings show that the students drafting on FSGO before writing the story not only improves the students’ vocabulary mastery, but also improves the students’ spelling. It is also shown by the improvement of mechanic’s score in pre-test (48.8), post –test 1 (65.2) and post-test 2 (73). The drafting step in four square helps to eliminate common errors in spelling.

After implementing Four Square Writing Method (FSWM) above that use to improve students’ writing skill, the researcher got some results dealing with both writing skill and class situation. The result presented below:

*Table 2: The Improvement of Students’ Score in Each Writing Indicators*

Indicators	Pre-Test	Post-Test 1	Post-Test 2
Content	19.76	22.13	23.61
Organization	11.26	13.86	18.23
Vocabulary	11.15	14.28	15.57
Grammar	11.34	16.36	17.19
Mechanics	2.44	3.26	3.65

Mean Score	55.05	70.13	78.86
Passing Grade		76	

The table 2 shows the students' improvement in writing skill. Before action, the students had problems in all writing indicators. After the implementation of FSWM in cycle 1, it was found that the students got improvement in all indicators. Then, after cycle 2, the findings showed

that students had more improvement in writing score. In the cycle 2 the students score reach the passing grade.

The students' improvement was not only found in writing skill but also in class situation. The improvements are presented in the following table

*Table 3. The Improvement of Students' Writing Skill*

Research Findings	Before Action Research	After Action Research
d. The improvement of the students' writing skill	<p>6. Students often made mistakes in stating main idea for their writing;</p> <p>7. Students made many mistake in structure;</p> <p>8. Students' word choice were limited</p> <p>9. Students' writing lack cohesiveness and coherence.</p> <p>10. Students made many mistake in word order;</p>	<p>6. Students were able to explore their ideas.</p> <p>7. Students were able to use proper words in writing.</p> <p>8. Students were able to produce grammatically correct sentences</p> <p>9. Students were able to use word order.</p> <p>10. Students were able cohesiveness and coherence in their writing.</p>
e. The achievement of the students' test score	The students' mean score was 55.05.	The students' mean score was improved into 70.13 in the post test 1 and it also improved into 78.86 in the final post test. It got higher than their score in pretest.
f. The improvement of class situation	<p>6. Students did not pay attention to the teacher;</p> <p>7. Students did non academic activities than focusing the lesson.</p> <p>8. Students could not answer when teacher asked question</p>	<p>6. Students pay attention to the teacher and more focused in the writing class.</p> <p>7. Students could focus the lesson in the teaching learning process.</p> <p>8. Students gave more responses when the teacher</p>

and they seldom asked  
question to the teacher.

9. Students refused to present  
their writing in front of the  
class.

asked, they active answer  
the question and they brave  
asked about the lesson what  
they did not understand.

9. Students brave to present  
their writing in front of the  
class.

From the table presented above, it can be seen that there are positive improvements in class situation after implementation FSWM in writing class.

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

After conducting the research by using Four Square Writing Method, the researcher got the research finding that there is a positive improvement of students' writing skill. The result of the research showed that the use of Four Square Writing Method is able to improve the students' writing skill that covers writing to explore their ideas, to write paragraph by using the correct grammar, to use vocabularies, to write paragraph coherently and cohesively, and to use word order and punctuation in writing sentences. The enhancement of the students' writing skill is also supported by the result of the test scores. The mean score of pre-test was 55.05 and it improved into 70.13 in the post-test 1 and 78.86 in the final post test. It proves that the use of Four Square Writing Method in teaching writing can improve the students' writing skill.

The class situation also changed after the researcher conducted action research using Four Square Writing Method. Using Four Square Writing Method, the students were more active because in Four Square Writing Method students had some discussion with their pairs and they could share their ideas freely. They were motivated by their discussing. The students enjoyed the activities during the lesson. The graphic organizer in FSWM

also make students not bored in teaching learning process. They also can make the graphic organizer by themselves. The students freely shared their ideas in front of the class.

The researcher proposes some suggestion after conducting the research by using Think Pair Share to improve students writing skill for the students, the school, and other researcher. For teachers, Four Square Writing Method can be used in teaching writing for narrative, descriptive and persuasive texts in all of grade levels. The teachers can make collaboration between Four Square Writing Method and media such as pictures to make interesting teaching-learning process. They must make the situation alive and make the students get involved in the activities during teaching learning process. In categorizing and adding more details step, it is better for the teacher not to give long time to think individually. The teachers should help the students with some guiding questions when the students get the blank idea. Besides, the Four Square Writing Method has some weaknesses, such as time consuming and time management. When implementing the FSWM, the teacher should look the time they were going to used. To make the time effective, the teacher should help the students to give some clue in each box in order to make them easily to construct the sentence/ paragraph. The teacher should explains the material and give exercises until the student mastered one of the generic structure of the text, for example:



tenses. After that, they can implement the FSWM effectively and they can write better than before. For students the students should be accustomed to the writing habit themselves. It is not necessary to write a long story to practice, but writing sentences in routine. The students can improve their writing skill by themselves in school or home using Four Square Writing Method because the steps are very easy and interested to practice. For institutions, the institution should encourage and support the English teacher to improve the quality of their teaching. It can be done through providing facilities that enables access to new materials and media of teaching and learning. Four Square Writing Method can be a kind of teaching writing method that should be implemented in daily teaching-learning process by teachers. To other researcher this study is only a little effort in improving students' writing skill. This study is done by implementing Four Square Writing Method as the method in teaching writing. It is expected for the other researcher that the result of this study can be used as a reference for further research conducted in the future in order to create a better teaching learning process.

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